The Story of the Caliph and the Rider

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Written by Mansoor Ali Shah

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Chapter 1: A Glimpse of Humility and Leadership

Vigilant Anticipation: Awaiting News from the Battlefield

During the momentous Battle of Yarmouk, a pivotal episode in Islamic military history, ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allah be pleased with him) exhibited a remarkable display of personal concern and vigilance. Each day, he would stand outside for hours, awaiting news from the battlefield.

A Messenger Approaches: The Rider from Yarmouk

On one such day, a man arrived, mounted on a camel, bearing tidings of victory. This rider was unaware of the identity of the man before him. He did not recognise any symbol of leadership—no crown, no visible sign of office, and no entourage. Thus, he paid no attention to ʿUmar (may Allah be pleased with him) and hastened onward.

The Commander’s Inquiry: Questions from the Caliph

ʿUmar (may Allah be pleased with him) began to inquire about the outcome of the battle and the state of the Muslim forces. The rider, unknowing of whom he was speaking to, neither stopped nor gave heed to the questions posed to him. Despite this, the Commander of the Faithful ran alongside the camel for some distance, persistently attempting to learn about the events of Yarmouk.

Recognition and Remorse: The Truth Revealed

As they approached the settled area near the outskirts of the city, local residents recognised ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allah be pleased with him) and greeted him with the salutation reserved for the Caliph. At this, the messenger became aware of the true identity of the man he had ignored. Stricken with regret, he apologised profusely for his unintentional disrespect.

The Caliph’s Magnanimous Response:

ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb:

"I took those steps for the sake of reward. You have no need to apologise."

A Lesson in Humility: The Character of the Companions

This incident stands as a profound testimony to the humility and spiritual focus of the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Their conduct, even in positions of power, was marked by sincerity, modesty, and a constant yearning for divine recompense. The episode remains a source of moral reflection and historical admiration.